

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

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IN RETROSPECT

One of the purposes of this journal is to encourage lodge officers and members to be more active in the things which belong to Freemasonry and to enlarge their viewpoint through the study of our Craft. Through our columns we can only suggest ways and means, we cannot and do not intend to issue orders.

It has been a criticism of long standing that sufficient encouragement is not given whereby a fuller and a wider knowledge of Freemasonry may be the possession of the average member. Many programmes have been suggested, few have actually been put into operation.

We are inclined to believe that the duty of "instructing the brethren in Freemasonry" has been sadly neglected, and we need not re-state here whose responsibility it is to provide that instruction.

As an example of what can be done along the line of instructing the brethren it was suggested by us several months ago that every Worshipful Master could profitably set apart a minimum of fifteen minutes at each regular meeting of the Lodge and that something additional to and explanatory of the work could be considered.

There have been a few Masters who carried this suggestion into effect and the reports reaching our desk gives us assurance that something has been accomplished by those Masters. Only the members who have benefitted from these fifteen minute programs can testify the effect upon their Masonic thinking but if such an activity could be multiplied and extended the Craft throughout the Jurisdiction of Manitoba and beyond would undoubtedly be improved.

Why is it that we find so many Worshipful Masters so degree minded that nothing but the conferring of degrees seems to appear on the trestle boards of their lodges? This is not and never has been the plan and purpose of Freemasonry and if these conditions continue on the ratio we find today then we will not need to travel very far to find an explanation for disinterested membership, lapsed membership, and a humdrum monthly meeting place where only a corporal's guard is in attendance.

We owe it to the membership at large more than to the petitioner who has not yet crossed the threshold of Freemasonry to provide at our lodge meetings something more than lip service ceremony which can only be participated in by the officers concerned.

Let us rouse ourselves. There is a wonderful field just beside us waiting the inspiration which if properly directed will bring a rich harvest in our quest for brotherhood.

To the Wardens who in the short space of ninety days will have their gaze set upon the East we would urge that they begin now to lay plans and draw designs for the structure they intend to raise once they are invested with the jewel and authority of Worshipful Master.

The office is no sinecure and if our officers elect will seriously consider their responsibility and act wisely they will indeed prove worthy of the confidence given to them by the members of their lodge.

Let us resolve to make tomorrow better than today or yesterday.

A WAITING PERIOD

We have referred to this subject in previous issues and have emphasized the value of taking time to confer degrees in the Craft Lodge. There is a great deal lost and nothing whatever gained when we rush our young initiates pell mell to the culminating degree which signifies that another young man or group of men have been raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

Still the rush goes on and one would imagine that some Worshipful Masters are more concerned about the total number of new members he can raise during his tenure as Master than the duty and responsibility he owes to all the other members of his Lodge.

At the Annual Conference of Grand Masters held in Washington, D.C., last winter, M.W. Brother Hugh M. Craig, Grand Master of Texas, delivered an address on the subject "Should there be a waiting period between degrees?" In part Brother Craig had this to say: "I should like to debate the affirmative side of this question for the reason, I, personally, feel that there should be a waiting period between degrees and one even longer than that of one lunar month which now obtains to Texas."

The two great bulwarks of the Fraternity, those which protect its purity and integrity, are the proper qualifications of its candidates and the necessary proficiency of a Mason who seeks advancement to a higher degree. I hesitate to say which is the more harmful—to admit one who is not qualified, or to promote a candidate who is ignorant of his first lessons. One affects the external, the other the internal character of the Craft. The one brings discredit upon the Institution among the profane, who too often regard us with distrust, envy and dislike; the other introduces ignorance and incapacity into our membership and dishonors the science of Masonry in our own eyes. The one builds our walls with imperfect and worthless stones, which mar the outward beauty and impair the strength of our temple, the other fills our inner sanctums with disorder and confusion, leaving the building incapable of its destined uses.

"A too hurried advancement is often attended with serious results so far as the candidate is concerned. There is no 'royal road' to Masonic perfection. A knowledge of its tenets, philosophy and science and in consequence an appreciation of its beauties, is acquired only by long and diligent study. Masonry does not offer too much to the average observer to attract his attention or hold his interest; as a matter of fact it makes no attempt to do so, but by insisting upon the candidate taking the time necessary to become 'proficient' he of necessity is given the opportunity to behold some of the beauties of the temple between the outer porch and the sanctuary, and is consequently imbued with a desire to go beyond the fundamental ground work given in the ritual.

"These are the brethren upon whose shoulders rest the future of the Masonic Fraternity. They are the ones who by being required to 'take their time' have formed an admiration for the institution, love for its principles, and appreciation of the great and glorious role, the order has played and must continue to play in this age of Godless confusion. He learns that Masonry is a believer in and a conservator of divine truth, an exponent of the dignity of Man and the Fatherhood of God. I do not mean to say that all who 'wait the time with patience' are thereby created Masons 'par excellence,' but I will say this, that by far the great majority of the Masonic leaders of tomorrow will come from those who by measured and patient steps have passed through the various apartments of the Temple.

"That our founding fathers believed in sufficient time elapsing between the degrees is attested by the fact that the earliest, or I should say, oldest Masonic document extant, provided that if a Master took an apprentice, he must teach him 'ably.' Similar provisions are to be found in practically all of the old manuscripts. Of course there was a corresponding obligation on the part of the apprentice to learn the work, and until he did so, he could not advance. We recognize this principle to be equitable when we ask if the candidate has made 'suitable proficiency in the preceding degree.' The answer to that question should be an unequivocal, 'he has.' To do this honestly requires that the necessary amount of time be given between the degrees to enable him to qualify.

"Frankly, anyone who devotes himself to the acquisition of a science, must become proficient in its elementary instructions before he can comprehend its higher branches. This truth is so self-evident as to require no argument. Speculative Masonry is a science, therefore it follows as the night follows the day that the qualifications for a higher degree is proficiency in the preceding one, which brings us right back to the predicate laid down previously, 'Time!' it is of the essence. Without time between the degrees, we cannot hope to inculcate in our candidates the knowledge of the esoteric side of Masonry, without which they are merely 'members,' not Masons."

BORROWED BOOKS

Our library is a circulating library. Now it should not be necessary to explain to the average reader of books what "circulating" means but to the borrower of books who must for ever remain outside the average class this paragraph is directed.

When a book is borrowed from your Masonic Library it ceases to circulate, at least for the time being and it is only fair that the reader should have a reasonable time in which to read it. We even go further and grant him time to re-read the book should its contents touch a receptive chord in his study or research of a subject.

Just as soon as you are through reading you are expected to return it by mail or otherwise without delay. Others may be waiting for the same volume and until it arrives back on the library shelf it is practically out of circulation. It is the constant distribution of our books that makes ours a circulating library and the quicker it is returned the more readers get the benefit of its contents.

There are some points we wish to emphasize. When you receive a book from the library it is loaned to you and you alone. It is your personal responsibility to retain it in your own possession for the time you require it. You should never lend a library book, borrowed in your name to any other brother regardless of who he is. We don't doubt his honesty or integrity any more than you do but once you part with a borrowed book you have lost personal control of a valuable item which does not belong to you but to the library.

If some other brother is interested in any book you have borrowed then he can borrow it for himself just as you did. Books should never be passed between individuals especially when these are the books belonging to the Grand Lodge Library.

We would mention that it is difficult to replace scarce and rare books many of which were printed many years ago and duplicates are well nigh impossible to obtain.

Now if you happen to be one of those members who are sub-average and by reason of forgetfulness or maybe it was carelessness, neglected to return any of our books will you please wrap the volume up right now and mail it back in the morning.

We do want to keep our books circulating. We don't want to discourage the brethren when they ask for Masonic literature and it can readily be seen how much more effective your library can be if every reader will return his borrowed book once he has read the final chapter.

Remember every brother regardless of his address in Manitoba can borrow the books in our library and it will cost nothing to avail of this service; not even the postage on the return of the books.

THE APATHY OF TODAY

We have become accustomed to hear complaints from time to time that so many lodge members seem careless and disinterested in their Masonic affiliations.

True, they keep themselves in good standing by remitting the annual dues to the Secretary and obtaining thereby a card which indicates they are clear on the books. Attendance at the regular meetings however seldom, and in many cases, never, give them a single thought. The lodge is getting along all right, new members are being initiated, the detail can be looked after by the elected officers, but Brother Stayaway remains an absentee.

Then we worry ourselves with the terrible conditions so extensively dished up on the front page of the daily papers. How often do we meet a man who admits his personal liability to the disorder and the restlessness so abundant and do we ever hear him admit that by reason of his inert and lazy habits some of the blame rests squarely upon his shoulders.

A Freemason is looked upon as a man whose word can be relied on, and in a general sense that is so, but what can we think of men who solemnly undertake responsibilities and then leave George to carry on.

We are warned to beware of the trouble-maker within our gates. A word of warning came under our observation a short time ago and it is passed on for the admonition not only to he who takes life easily but is sometimes too self-centered to admit his own shortcomings. The item in question in part said,

"What enemies stand out in this restless, turbulent world? The newspapers and magazines display concern about those that menace the world civilizations. But the enemies within! Those enemies of the human race that exist in every community, in every Masonic group, that live in the marshes and sloughs of life, that, like quicksands, treacherously pull down those who would arise out of the apathy of human selfishness, ignorance, intolerance, fanaticism, superstition, the supine indifference of the individual, the group and the world at large, these are much more to be feared. So long as they hold control there is danger. Men are essentially careless, lukewarm and indifferent if the object set before them does not seem to affect their immediate personal needs.

"We verily believe that personally each of us in the human race is as lazy as he feels that life will let him be. The hills above entice with their green slopes and waving trees, but the valleys are warm and comfortable; so let us sleep while we may. Therefore our first efforts must needs be to make our goal the bringing to each one's self the fact that failure to aid in upbuilding will let us sink back into oblivion and carry with us our families, our neighbours and our nation.

"Never before has there been such a necessity to begin at home in the family, in Masonry, in the community, to endeavour

to establish peace, charity and toleration. And the greatest of these is toleration, for without this background, charity is meaningless and peace a misnomer.

"To each of us then comes the burden of selfishly looking forward and working toward that end that will aid in washing away the muck of the ages and will enable us to make our way to a cleaner, better shore. One where all nations may some day abide in unity as a true brotherhood. Toleration toward each other's frailties, toward each one's age-old habits; a willingness to give and take, to praise the good we find in others and cast out the dark side of ourselves.

"The quest is as old as the ages, and yet ever new and ever needed. We, as Masons, have long had given us the view of *our* work—now, to heed it."

JIM HENDERSON

Our friendship covered a period of twenty-five years and from our first acquaintance he insisted that he should be addressed in the familiar term "Jim."

Well, Jim has left the friends he loved dearly and no more will he sound the gavel in a Craft Lodge. He passed away on Dominion Day, 1st July last and at his own request his remains were interred in the peaceful cemetery at Virden.

Jim had a long and interesting Masonic career. He was Master of Grayson Lodge No. 48—Grand Lodge of Saskatchewan in 1913. After his transfer to Manitoba he was Master of Miniota Lodge No. 102 in the year 1919 and from 1914 to 1939 was Secretary of that Lodge.

It was a happy day in his life when he was elected Most Worshipful Grand Master in 1940. His year of office brought him great pleasure and his quiet dignity and deep sincerity marked every official act.

Jim Henderson was a Freemason. He not only knew the work but he went in and out of the different communities carrying the spirit of the Craft into everything he did.

When elected our Grand Librarian in 1948 he set out to do a real job in the library but very shortly after his election his health broke down. He was constantly under the care of his doctor but medical skill could not master the disease.

We know the memory of this good brother will be treasured in every part of the Jurisdiction and his many friends will have a place in their hearts in which Jim will always be present.

Jim is now gathered unto his fathers but I am sure that he is having a grand time discussing Lodge affairs with kindred spirits who had preceded him on the long journey.

And we can see him, in fancy, carrying on that service, so willingly and lovingly shown while he labored among the workmen here below.

Farewell Jim—Happy to meet again.